

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2012 ALEUTIAN ISLANDS DISTRICT STATE-WATERS PACIFIC COD OPENING ANNOUNCED #4-GF-03-12

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has announced closure of the federal catcher-vessel trawl sector Pacific cod fishery in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands area effective at noon on (Wednesday) February 29. Therefore, the parallel Pacific cod season will close and the state-waters Pacific cod season will open to commercial fishing at noon on (Monday) March 5 in all state waters of the Aleutian Islands District west of 170° W long.

The 2012 Aleutian Islands District state-waters Pacific cod season initially opened January 1, 2012 between 175° W long. and 178° W long. to vessels 60 feet overall length (OAL) or less using pot, jig, and non-pelagic trawl gear and vessels 58 feet OAL or less using longline gear, and will remain open to those vessel sizes until 11:59 a.m. March 5. Beginning noon March 5, the state-waters season will expand to include all state waters west of 170° W long. and will open to vessels 125 feet or less OAL using pot gear, vessels 100 feet OAL or less using non-pelagic trawl gear, and vessels 58 feet or less OAL using longline and jig gear.

Harvest to date in the state-waters Pacific cod fishery is confidential; however, over 12 million pounds will be available beginning noon March 5.

All fishermen, including tender operators and processors, must register with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) prior to participating in the state-waters season. Fishermen previously registered for the parallel groundfish fishery must complete a non-exclusive registration for the Aleutian Islands District state-waters season.

Each registered fisherman will be required to report harvest information to the department on a daily basis. Reports for the prior 24 hours (midnight to midnight) of fishing must be received by ADF&G in Dutch Harbor by 10:00 a.m. daily. Reports will be taken by telephone, fax (see contact information above), or sent via email to trent.hartill@alaska.gov.

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The daily harvest limit for each vessel is 150,000 pounds round weight, with a maximum of 150,000 pounds of unprocessed Pacific cod on board a vessel at any time. All Pacific cod taken must be retained. A fisherman incurring an overage of these limits must immediately report the overage to ADF&G and forfeit proceeds from the overage to the state. A fisherman may not have more processed Pacific cod onboard than the round weight equivalent of the fish reported on ADF&G fish tickets during the Aleutian Islands state-waters Pacific cod season. Bycatch limits applicable in the parallel Pacific cod season will apply in the state-waters Pacific cod season. Enforcement action will be pursued against vessel operators who incur overages of the daily or trip limit.

Steller sea lion closures in place prior to 2011 will be in effect during the state-waters Pacific cod season. Steller sea lion closures are located in Table 5 to 50 CFR part 679 (69 FR 75865, December 20, 2004), posted on the NMFS website (<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/index/frules/frules.asp?Yr=2004>) and Table 12 to 50 CFR part 679 (73 FR 76136, December 15, 2008), also posted on the NMFS website at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/index/frules/frules.asp?Yr=2008>. In addition to the Steller sea lion protection measures referenced above, fishing is prohibited within three nautical miles of Kanaga Island/Ship Rock (51° 46.70 N, 177° 20.72 W) during the state-waters Pacific cod fishery.

The Aleutian Islands Habitat Conservation Area and coral garden closures, in effect during the parallel Pacific cod season, will also apply during the state-waters season.

For further information, contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239.

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